

KRESHNIK BERISHA



AN ALBANIAN - AMERICAN
ENTREPRENEUR KRESHNIK BERISHA



**FAN ZONE FOR THE 2026 FIFA WORLD CUP IN
NEWARK NEW JERSEY**

**A VERY SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVE LAUNCHED AND
IMPLEMENTED BY ALBANIAN - AMERICAN
ENTREPRENEUR KRESHNIK BERISHA**



GENERAL BUSINESS

NRBP Brings Community Together to Reflect on Newark Fan Village Success

NRBP BRINGS COMMUNITY TOGETHER TO REFLECT ON NEWARK FAN VILLAGE SUCCESS

On Aug 19, 2026

Local leaders, small business owners, and community partners gathered this week at First Presbyterian Church for “Newark and the World Cup: A Community Debrief,” convened by the Newark Regional Business Partnership (NRBP). The discussion celebrated Newark’s accomplishments during the 39-day World Cup Newark Fan Village while also taking an honest look at the lessons learned, challenges faced, and opportunities ahead as the city prepares to host future international events.

According to event organizers Kreshnik Berisha and Gabe Ribeiro, more than 144,000 visitors experienced free games, music, and cultural programming at the

Fan Village, which operated for 39 consecutive days without a single public safety incident. What began as a grassroots idea developed through weekly community meetings in January 2026 grew into one of New Jersey's most successful World Cup gathering places. The debrief brought together Councilmen Michael Silva and C. Lawrence Crump, representatives of Councilwomen Amina Bey and Louise Scott-Rountree, and the organizers and partners who helped bring the Fan Village to life. Participants reflected on the collaboration, determination, and community spirit that made the effort possible.

“It was where the world came together,” Silva said, calling it one of the proudest moments of his career.

The discussion also highlighted the Fan Village’s broader economic and civic impact. Berisha and Ribeiro shared the realities of building and sustaining a major activation with limited resources, while Oya Tukul, Dean of the Martin Tuchman School of Management at New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT), revealed findings from a social media geofencing project commissioned by NJIT. The project analyzed activity from more than 4,000 accounts across 60 countries and found that approximately 75% of the

social media sentiment captured during match times was positive.

Key partnerships made the scale possible, including a sponsorship from Anheuser-Busch and a FIFA viewing license that allowed organizers to show the matches to the crowds. Organizers credited a wide network of collaborators, including Plusable, Sihana Hospitality Group, CasaNova, John Schreiber and NJPAC, public safety partners, and the late Al Coutinho, whose contributions were remembered warmly.

Looking ahead to the FIFA Women's World Cup, UEFA European Championship, Africa Cup of Nations, Copa América, and other major events,

participants identified several priorities: start planning early, strengthen citywide collaboration, measure impact across all five wards, engage county partners, and market Newark as a destination capable of welcoming the world.

For Berisha, the opportunity is clear: “Why not Newark?” He urged the city and its partners to approach these opportunities with confidence as New Jersey’s premier host destination.

“The Newark Fan Village showed what is possible when a community comes together around a shared vision,” said Ferlanda Fox Nixon, President and CEO of NRBP. “Its success gives us an opportunity to think bigger about

Newark's future. We can build on this momentum, welcome the world with confidence, and ensure that the benefits of major international events reach businesses, residents, and neighborhoods across all five wards. The Fan Village was more than a successful World Cup celebration—it was a blueprint for what Newark can accomplish together.”

To access more business news, visit [NJB News Now](#).

1. **KRESHNIK BERISHA**
2. **GABE RIBEIRO**
3. **MICHAEL SILVA**

4. **C. LAWRENCE CRUMP**
5. **AMINA BEY**
6. **LOUISE SCOTT-ROUNTREE**
7. **OYA TUKE**
8. **MARTIN TUCHMAN**
9. **JOHN SCHREIBER**
10. **AL COUTINHO**
11. **FERLANDA FOX NIXON**

Organizations and institutions mentioned:

- . **Newark Regional Business Partnership (NRBP)**
- . **First Presbyterian Church**
- . **New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT)**

- **Martin Tuchman School of Management**
- **Anheuser-Busch**
- **FIFA**
- **Plusable**
- **Sihana Hospitality Group**
- **CasaNova**
- **New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC)**
- **NJB News Now**



Kreshnik Berisha knows that Newark is a global village, where people from around the world have always converged to make it their home.

With the arrival of the FIFA World Cup this week, Newark's international identity will be front and center as thousands visit the Newark Fan Village, which Berisha, a Rutgers University–Newark alumnus, has

created in the city's Ironbound section, long a hotbed of soccer fandom.

“We wanted to create a fan village that was inclusive and creative and made an impact beyond the tournament,” said Berisha, who graduated with a master's degree in Global Affairs in 2024. “We wanted to do a boutique, curated, soulful event that pertained to the community and was by the community.”

The Fan Village, which runs the length of the series and coincides with the Ironbound's Portugal Day Festival the weekend of June 12, reflects the neighborhood's multicultural vibrancy. It is home to large Portuguese, Brazilian, and South and Central American

communities, who have made soccer an integral part of local culture.

“There’s a deep love of soccer in the Ironbound,” said Berisha, who heads the Sihana Hospitality Group. “This is where it lives, arguably, in the state and the country.”

In addition to hosting daily watch parties and other activities, the Fan Village will showcase local vendors. It runs from June 11 to July 19.

Participating restaurants will represent the diverse culinary traditions of the Ironbound, including Brazilian, Ecuadorian, Mexican, Spanish, and Italian cuisine.

“Soccer speaks to people the way food speaks to people. It’s a point of connection that’s very seamless. It happens organically and naturally,” said Berisha.

Located in the parking lot of the former Iberia Tavern & Restaurant, where the landmark eatery’s turreted castle still stands, the Fan Village will include two large viewing screens, a marketplace, health and wellness programming, family seating areas, DJs, comedy performances, and cultural events organized in partnership with NJPAC.

Rutgers–Newark is among the sponsors.

“Soccer unites people across continents, languages and cultures, and that spirit of

global connection mirrors who we are as an institution,” said Rutgers University–Newark Chancellor Tonya Smith-Jackson.

“This partnership underscores our deep commitment to expanding opportunity for students and residents from all backgrounds. We are honored to celebrate it alongside our community on this global stage,” she said.

“It’s in our backyard. And every day, it brings an opportunity for us to highlight Rutgers–Newark and provide our support for this community event,” said Arcelio Aponte, Rutgers–Newark Chief Financial Officer and Senior Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration.

Berisha, the son of an Albanian ambassador to the United Kingdom, Turkey and the United Nations, grew up in Linden and spent a lot of time in Newark as a teen. He developed a love for the city.

In recent years, he opened a handful of Newark restaurants, including Five Corners Ristorante, an Italian eatery, the Sihana Café on Ferry Street, which exhibits art and houses a secondhand bookstore; and Sihana Bistro on Washington Street.

Sihana means “like the moon” in Albanian.

“It also means a celestial status or feeling,” said Berisha, whose background is Albanian.

His goal is to elevate and amplify Newark's history and its rich legacy of arts and culture.

Berisha credits Rutgers–Newark with preparing him for his entrepreneurial role in the city and the complex task of organizing an international event involving businesses, community groups, government officials, and corporate partners.

“It was a very fulfilling time, intellectually enriching,” he said of his experience at RU–N. “It helped with the work I’m doing here in Newark.”

His education at Rutgers–Newark also equipped him with the skills to navigate bureaucracy and build partnerships.

“These relationships were built on the strength of having attended Rutgers,” he said. “The skills I developed are instrumental when you’re putting together a festival like this.”

The Fan Village, he said, is an extension of what he hopes to accomplish in the city. Soccer is the perfect catalyst, providing a powerful tool for bringing people together, said Berisha.

“It’s the world’s sport,” he said. “That’s why it’s called the beautiful game.”



Flag Cities and Newark Fan Village Join
Forces for One Unforgettable World Cup
Celebration in Newark

News provided by

[Newark Alliance](#)

Jun 19, 2026, 10:02 ET

Share this article

**"KICKING IT IN NEWARK TOGETHER"
UNITES TWO OF THE CITY'S LARGEST
SOCCER FAN EXPERIENCES ON JUNE
24**

NEWARK, N.J., June 19,
2026 /PRNewswire/ -- Goya presents Flag
Cities 2026 in partnership with
Hackensack Meridian Health and Newark
Fan Village are teaming up to create one
incredible World Cup celebration in the
heart of Newark on Wednesday, June 24,
bringing together two of the city's premier
soccer activations for a full day and
evening of international soccer, music,
culture, food, and community.



The Newark World Cup Fan Village is a free, tournament long festival in the Ironbound section of Newark that brings the excitement of the World Cup to a central, community-driven destination.

As part of this exciting collaboration, the Flag Cities Newark event originally planned for Mulberry Commons will now take place at the Newark Fan Village

located at 70 Ferry Street. The updated venue, located just two blocks from Newark Penn Station and approximately 22 minutes via train from MetLife Stadium, provides enhanced capacity, improved accessibility, and a more immersive experience for attendees. By joining forces at a single location, the organizations are creating an expanded fan experience that combines the best of both events and celebrates the rich cultural diversity, neighborhoods, and communities that make Newark one of the world's great soccer cities.

The collaborative event, themed "**Kicking It in Newark Together**," will take place from 2:00 p.m. to midnight, featuring live

broadcasts of all six FIFA World Cup matches of the day, cultural performances, headline entertainment, international cuisine, and interactive fan experiences and soccer activations.

The partnership represents a collaboration among Newark Fan Village, Flag Cities 2026 (organized by Axiom Communications and Meadowlands Chamber of Commerce), the City of Newark and Councilman Michael Silva, New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) , Choose New Jersey, Newark Alliance Ironbound Business Improvement District, and Newark City Parks Foundation, all working together to create a world-class fan experience that

celebrates Newark's passion for soccer and its rich cultural diversity.

The event will feature:

- Headline entertainment featuring DJ Funkmaster Flex and DJ Big Ben
- Cultural performances celebrating the nations competing that evening
- Giant LED screens broadcasting the World Cup matches of the day
- International food trucks representing flavors from around the globe
- Craft vendors and merchandise vendors
- A premium bar featuring Diageo brands including Casamigos Tequila and Buchanan's Scotch Whisky

World Cup Matches Featured June 24

Fans can watch all six matches live throughout the day:

3:00 p.m.

- . Switzerland vs. Canada
- . Bosnia and Herzegovina vs. Qatar

6:00 p.m.

- . Morocco vs. Haiti
- . Scotland vs. Brazil

9:00 p.m.

- . South Africa vs. South Korea
- . Czechia vs. Mexico

Admission is free and open to the public.

"Newark has always been a city where the world comes together — and the FIFA

World Cup 2026™ gives us the opportunity to show that on a global stage. This Fan Village is more than an event; it is an economic driver, a cultural celebration, and a source of civic pride for every resident of this city. My administration is fully behind this initiative, and I am proud that Newark will be at the center of this historic moment."

— Mayor Ras J. Baraka, City of Newark

"We are thrilled to partner with Newark Fan Village to create an unforgettable World Cup celebration that brings together soccer, music, food, and culture in one incredible location. This collaboration reflects what Flag Cities is all about — uniting communities, bringing

diverse cultures together, and creating memorable experiences that showcase the energy and spirit of New Jersey on the world stage."

— Jim Kirkos, President & CEO,
Meadowlands Chamber of Commerce

"The Newark Fan Village is truly a 'Made in Newark' product. It was conceived, designed, and brought to life by people who live, work, and believe deeply in this city. Our goal has always been to showcase the very best Newark has to offer—from its vibrant arts and cultural community to its unmatched passion for sport, to its culinary excellence and entrepreneurial spirit. What makes this project special is the incredible

collaboration between local businesses, cultural institutions, community organizations, and civic leaders who have come together around a shared vision.

The World Cup gives us a global stage, but the story we're telling is uniquely Newark: a story of diversity, resilience, hospitality, and community pride."

— Kreshnik Berisha, Newark Fan Village & Sihana Group

"The East Ward is the heart of Newark's immigrant communities, and there is no better place in this city to celebrate the FIFA World Cup 2026™ than right here among our neighbors. This event is an investment in our community — it brings visitors, it brings pride, and it tells the

world that Newark is open, welcoming, and ready to shine."

— Councilman Silva, East Ward, City of Newark

About Flag Cities

Flag Cities 2026 is a free, family-friendly series of seven fan festivals taking place throughout Northern New Jersey in celebration of the FIFA World Cup 2026™. Presented by Goya Foods in partnership with Hackensack Meridian Health, Flag Cities brings communities together through live match viewing, music, cultural performances, international cuisine, family activities, and interactive fan experiences. Hosted in partnership with local counties and municipalities,

Flag Cities celebrates the diversity, energy, and global spirit that make New Jersey one of the world's premier soccer destinations. Please visit www.flagcities.com for additional information

ABOUT NEWARK

For more information on the City of Newark, please visit <https://www.newarknj.gov/>.

ABOUT NEWARK FAN VILLAGE

The Newark World Cup Fan Village is a free, tournament long festival in the Ironbound section of Newark that brings the excitement of the World Cup to a central, community-driven destination.

Running daily and showing every match, it serves as a vibrant hub for fans to gather, featuring large scale viewing areas, cultural programming, family friendly activities, and a curated food hall highlighting cuisines from both Newark based restaurants and World Cup participating countries. Designed to attract hundreds of thousands of visitors, the Fan Village combines global soccer energy with Newark's rich cultural identity, creating a safe, accessible, and high impact experience for residents and visitors alike.

ABOUT NEWARK ALLIANCE

The Newark Alliance, through the combined strength and collaboration of

its members, drives inclusive economic growth for all of Newark, N.J. Our members comprise Newark's premier businesses, anchor institutions, and community partners, including Fortune 100 and 500 companies and several of the country's top universities, developers, hospitals, and arts institutions. United by a shared vision, the Alliance and its Members work collaboratively to cement Newark's status as one of America's most diverse, prosperous, exciting, and equitable cities. Visit us at www.newark-alliance.org, www.newarkhappening.com and www.downtownnewark.com.

SOURCE Newark Alliance



The Newark World Cup Fan Village is a free festival in the Ironbound section of Newark that brings the excitement of the World Cup to a central, community-driven destination. [Rutgers University-Newark is an event sponsor.](#)

Running daily and showing every World Cup match, it serves as a vibrant hub for fans to gather, featuring large scale viewing areas, cultural programming, family friendly activities, and a curated food hall highlighting cuisines from both Newark based restaurants and World Cup participating countries.

Designed to attract hundreds of thousands of visitors, the Fan Village

combines global soccer energy with Newark's rich cultural identity, creating a safe, accessible, and high impact experience for residents and visitors alike.

**More information available
at newarkfanvillage.com**

FLAG CITIES, NEWARK FAN VILLAGE UNITE FOR WORLD CUP CELEBRATION



The Newark World Cup Fan Village is a free, tournament-long festival in the Ironbound section of Newark. - PROVIDED BY NEWARK ALLIANCE

Flag Cities, Newark Fan Village unite for World Cup celebration

Matthew Fazelpoor//June 24, 2026//

The basics:

- *Newark Fan Village, Flag Cities 2026 partner for free June 24 World Cup celebration*
- *Event runs 2 p.m.-midnight in Newark's Ironbound*
- *Fans can watch six World Cup matches; enjoy food, music, cultural programming*
- *Organizers say combined showcases city's culture, hospitality, global appeal*

Two of Newark's largest World Cup fan experiences are joining forces for a daylong celebration of soccer, culture,

food and entertainment in the heart of the city.

Flag Cities 2026, presented by [Goya](#) and in partnership with Hackensack Meridian Health, and Newark Fan Village have partnered to create “Kicking It in Newark Together.” The free public event takes place June 24 at Newark Fan Village, located at 70 Ferry St. in the city’s Ironbound neighborhood.

Organizers say the collaboration combines the strengths of both events into a single destination for fans looking to celebrate the 2026 FIFA World Cup. As part of the partnership, the Flag Cities Newark event [originally planned for](#)

Mulberry Commons will relocate to Newark Fan Village.

The new venue offers additional capacity. It's also easily accessible for local residents and visiting soccer fans alike. Newark Fan Village is located just two blocks from Newark Penn Station and about 22 minutes by train from MetLife Stadium.

The event runs from 2 p.m. to midnight. Soccer fans can watch live broadcasts of all six scheduled World Cup matches on giant LED screens. It will also feature cultural performances, international cuisine, interactive soccer activities, vendors and live music. Headline

entertainment will include DJ Funkmaster Flex and DJ Big Ben.

Join the festivities:

Teaming up

Among others, the partnership brings together:

- Newark Fan Village
- Flag Cities 2026, presented by Goya and in partnership with Hackensack Meridian Health
- The City of Newark
- New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA)
- Choose New Jersey
- Newark Alliance

- Ironbound Business Improvement District
- Newark City Parks Foundation

Mayor Ras Baraka said the event reflects Newark's unique role as a global gathering place during the World Cup.



Mayor of Newark Baraka

“Newark has always been a city where the world comes together — and the [FIFA World Cup 2026](#) gives us the opportunity to show that on a global stage,” said Baraka. “This Fan Village is more than an event; it is an economic driver, a cultural

celebration, and a source of civic pride for every resident of this city. My administration is fully behind this initiative, and I am proud that Newark will be at the center of this historic moment.”

‘Made in Newark’

Organizers say the goal is to create an experience that celebrates soccer as well as the diverse communities that make Newark a destination for international visitors.



Kirkos

“We are thrilled to partner with Newark Fan Village to create an unforgettable World Cup celebration that brings together soccer, music, food, and culture in one incredible location. This collaboration reflects what Flag Cities is all about – uniting communities, bringing diverse cultures together, and creating memorable experiences that showcase the energy and spirit of New Jersey on the world stage,” said Jim Kirkos, president and CEO of the Meadowlands Chamber of Commerce and a chief organizer of Flag Cities.

Kreshnik Berisha of Newark Fan Village said local stakeholders developed the project to showcase the city’s strengths.

“The Newark Fan Village is truly a ‘Made in Newark’ product. It was conceived, designed, and brought to life by people who live, work, and believe deeply in this city,” Berisha said. “Our goal has always been to showcase the very best Newark has to offer – from its vibrant arts and cultural community to its unmatched passion for sport, to its culinary excellence and entrepreneurial spirit.

“KICKING IT IN NEWARK TOGETHER”



“Kicking It in Newark Together” has entertainment for World Cup fans and for those who just want enjoy enjoy food, entertainment and cultural programming.
– PROVIDED BY NEWARK ALLIANCE

“The World Cup gives us a global stage, but the story we’re telling is uniquely Newark: a story of diversity, resilience, hospitality, and community pride.”

No admission fee

Admission is free and open to the public.

The six World Cup matches scheduled for June 24 feature:

- Switzerland vs. Canada
- Bosnia and Herzegovina vs. Qatar
- Morocco vs. Haiti
- Scotland vs. Brazil
- South Africa vs. South Korea
- Czechia vs. Mexico

Attendees can also enjoy food, entertainment and cultural programming representing countries from around the world.

The Newark celebration builds on early momentum [for the Flag Cities series](#).

Organizers report more than 22,000 fans attended the first two events. That includes approximately 18,000 in Jersey City June 12 as well as an additional 6,000 at Overpeck Park June 14.

A third stop took place June 21 in Secaucus as the free fan festival continues its run through North Jersey ahead of additional events in East Rutherford, Bayonne and Paterson.

Tags: [Ironbound](#), [Newark Fan Village](#), [Newark](#), [Flag Cities 2026](#), [Goya](#), [FIFA World Cup 2026](#)

Related Articles

- [Newark launches FIFA World Cup 2026 fan campaign](#)
 - [Newark Alliance reshapes downtown growth, tourism](#)
 - [New Jersey businesses prep for World Cup 2026 economic surge](#)
 - [Flag Cities adds Newark, Jersey City for World Cup 2026 \(updated\)](#)
 - [World of Blue hotel opens VIP bookings for FIFA World Cup 2026](#)
-

WORLD CUP FAN VILLAGE



NEWARK, N.J. (PIX11) — The Newark World Cup Fan Village reached maximum capacity Sunday, as fans poured in to watch the final match between Spain and Argentina.

Organizers estimate 3,000 people came to the final watch party, with more lining Ferry Street to catch a glimpse of the game on a big screen.

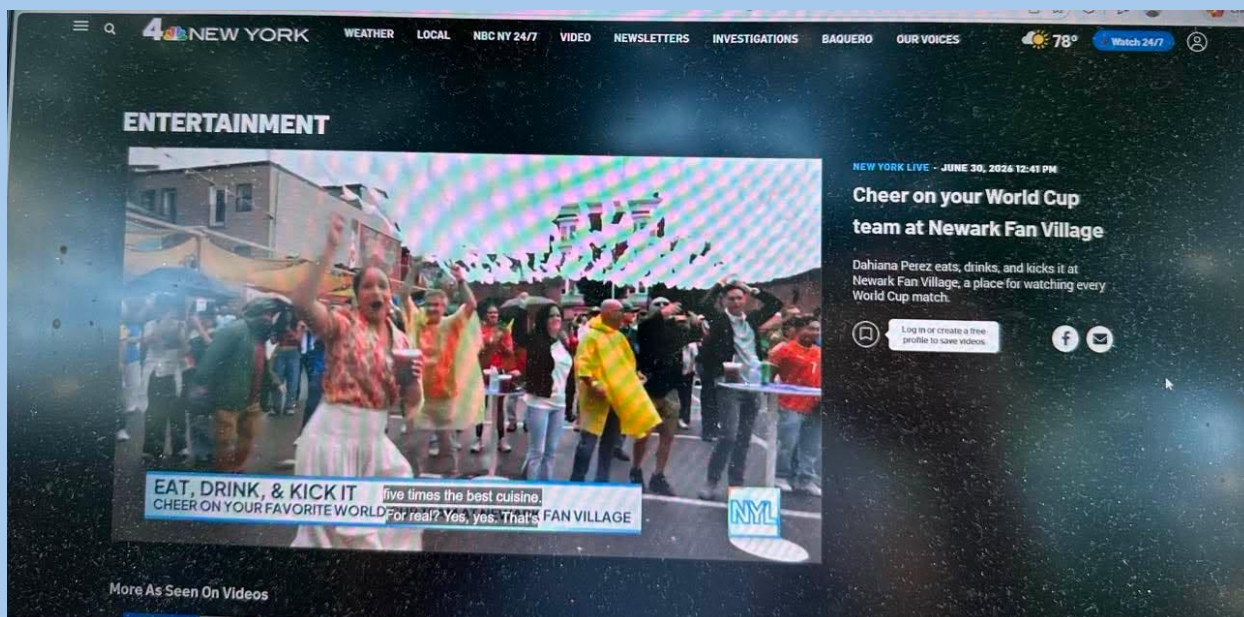
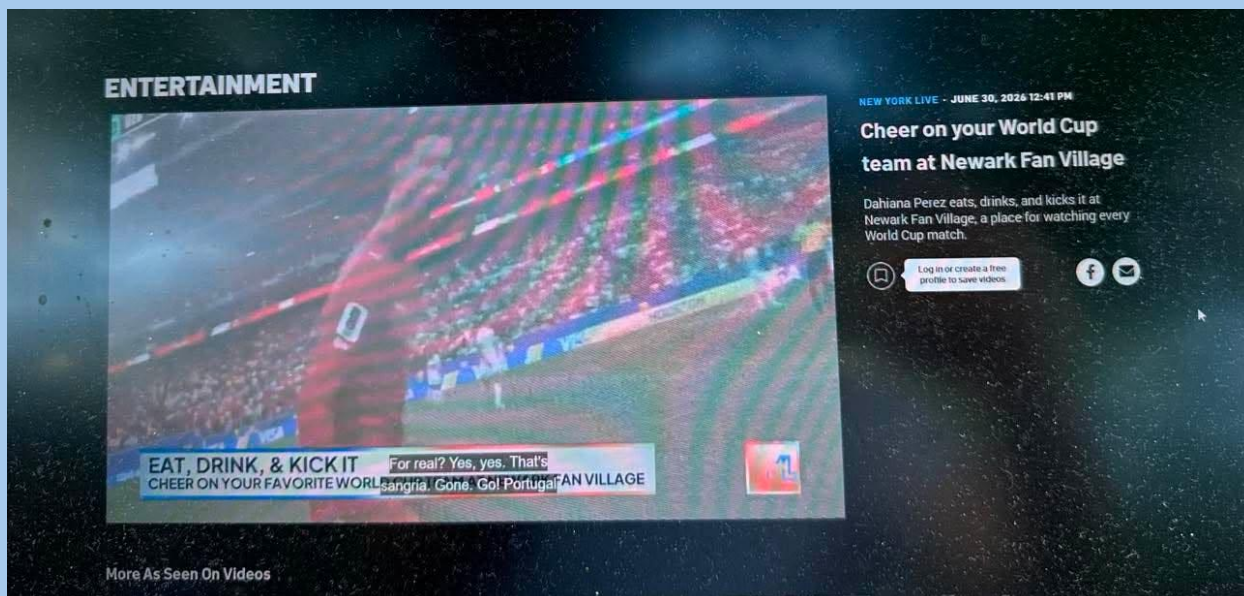
[Stay connected with community stories that matter: Visit our homepage](#)

“I’m so happy that the final was in our backyard,” said fan Ali Mahin. “It’s a surreal experience.”

“It was such a great match from beginning to end,” said Maddy Cedeno. “We were on the edge of our seats the whole time.”

The Newark Fan Village hosted watch parties for every match, culminating in Sunday’s final. The free festival featured viewing areas, family-friendly activities, and food from some of Newark’s most popular restaurants.

[Add as preferred source on Google](#)





optimum.
news12
NEW JERSEY



Ironbound Fan Village brings World Cup excitement to Newark

Organizers say every match of the tournament will be shown on two large LED screens, giving fans a chance to follow the action throughout the competition.

[Jennifer Portorreal](#)

Jun 13, 2026, 12:45 PM

Soccer fans don't need a ticket to MetLife Stadium to be part of the World Cup atmosphere this summer.

The Ironbound Fan Village opened along Ferry Street in Newark, creating a gathering place for fans to watch matches, celebrate their teams and experience the diverse cultures that make the neighborhood unique.

Organizers say every match of the tournament will be shown on two large LED screens, giving fans a chance to follow the action throughout the competition.

Located just a short walk from Newark Penn Station, the fan zone is expected to attract visitors from across New Jersey and beyond.

To bring the festival to life, it took months of preparation.

"Now that everything is said and done, It looks beautiful," said Carlos Ferreira, a spokesperson with Fan Village. "But there was a lot of work behind it that took months. Not only the daily work, but months to prepare. We met every Monday at Sport Club Portuguese Community Center, around the corner of prospect to delineate strategies to make this viable."

For many fans, the biggest win isn't just what's happening on the field. It's having a free place to experience the action.

"It's a very smart thing they did because who one to pay thousands of dollars to go to MetLife when they have this whole thing," said Joseph, a soccer fan. "They have whole set up for people to watch for free. It makes way more sense."

In addition to the matches, attendees can enjoy food representing many of the cultures that call Newark home, including Portuguese, Brazilian, Ecuadorean, Spanish and Central American cuisines. Live entertainment, including DJs, singers, and cultural performances, is also planned throughout the tournament.

NEWARK FAN VILLAGE EXPANDS AFTER MASSIVE CROWDS FLOCK TO WORLD CUP WATCH PARTIES





By Nicole Zanchelli

Published June 17, 2026 at 5:23 PM

NEWARK - Organizers of Newark's World Cup Fan Village have expanded the event's footprint after thousands of soccer fans packed the Iberia parking lot during its opening weekend, creating wait times of up to two hours as visitors sought to take part in one of the region's largest free World Cup watch parties.

Located in the Ironbound, a historic neighborhood renowned as a vibrant hub for Portuguese, Brazilian and other Latin American cultures, the free Newark Fan Village officially opened on June 12.

The opening weekend coincided with Newark's annual Portugal Day Weekend, with the Portugal Day celebrations drawing an estimated 380,000 to 390,000 visitors to the area, according to East Ward Councilman Michael Silva.

Sign Up for FREE Newark Newsletter

Get local news you can trust in your inbox.

This site is protected by reCAPTCHA and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

Thousands of fans in green and yellow jerseys representing Brazil erupted on June 13 when Brazil scored its goal

against Morocco. The match ultimately ended in a draw, 1-1.

Today, Newark crowds went wild during the Portugal vs. DR Congo match, which ended 1-1, jumping up and down and waving the red and green Portugal flag.

The overwhelming turnout revealed some capacity issues in the Fan Village, located in the Iberia parking lot off of Congress, Ferry and Prospect streets. The Fan Village was initially limited to 1,500 people at a time under public safety guidelines established by the Newark Fire Department, forcing many attendees to wait in long lines before entering.

"It was four or five months of planning this, and what happened was we have a

1,500-capacity limit," Silva said in a Facebook Live video. "A lot of people had to wait in line, and I want to apologize to them."

Organizers monitored attendance closely, allowing new visitors to enter only as others exited. "The problem is that once somebody's in there, they're not coming out, they're having such a great time," Silva said.

On Wednesday, just in time for the Portugal match, Silva – who spearheaded the Fan Village along with Mayor Ras J. Baraka – announced that the footprint for the watch party will expand to allow for about 2,000 additional attendees, which will cut down on wait times.

All matches are projected onto two large LED screens in the Iberia parking lot. Silva also announced that a third projector screen will be added to accommodate the crowds.

FIFA estimated that the New Jersey/New York region will see an influx of 1.2 million visitors traveling to the area for the World Cup. With only 80,000 stadium seats for each of the eight games, that leaves 560,000 people looking for some place to experience the games.

“We're one of the fan zones that are free,” Silva said in a Facebook Live video, claiming that fan zones in surrounding towns were initially charging for admission. “We’re bringing the world to

Newark together, and we're going to continue that."

Nicole Zanchelli is a reporter for TAPinto Newark. She covers local government, education and more. Email her at nzanchelli@tapinto.net.

Kick it in Newark for FIFA World Cup 2026™, Rising as the Region's Go-To Fan Destination

News provided by

Newark Alliance

Apr 14, 2026, 13:00 ET

Share this article

Citywide initiatives, community grants, global fan festivals, and visitor experiences will amplify Newark's position as a hub for culture, celebration and connection

NEWARK, N.J., April 14, 2026 /PRNewswire/ -- Leading up to this summer's FIFA World Cup 2026™, the City of Newark is launching a sweeping series of events, community programs, and initiatives for fans, visitors and residents, including community grants. Fans

arriving for matches will find a city that mirrors the game they love: global, expressive and alive with culture.



Led by Newark Alliance in partnership with the City of Newark and Invest Newark, at the heart of the “Kick it in Newark” campaign is a commitment to ensuring Newarkers are not just hosts of this global event – rather visitors and residents alike can experience the full cultural, economic, and civic momentum of this once-in-a-generation moment.

Led by [Newark Alliance](#) in partnership with the City of Newark and Invest Newark, at the heart of the "Kick it in Newark" campaign is a commitment to ensuring Newarkers are not just hosts of this global event – rather visitors and residents alike can experience the full cultural, economic, and civic momentum of this once-in-a-generation moment. Activations will happen in public spaces, neighborhoods, hotels and cultural venues across the city, creating a safe and vibrant environment designed to invite exploration while showcasing Newark's thriving arts, food, music and diverse communities.

"Anyone who knows Newark knows that so many of our residents trace their family roots to countries that dominate the World Cup," said Newark Mayor Ras J. Baraka. "Newark bursts with pride during the FIFA games every four years – and this year, as a Flag City, we are pulling out all the stops to provide residents and visitors with an immersive, celebratory soccer experience. We are ready to welcome the world to come stay with us. Treat yourself to our eateries, music, art, shopping and the unique vibe only Newark can provide."

Among the signature events recently announced is Newark's selection as a host site for [Goya Presents Flag Cities 2026](#), a regional fan festival series

celebrating the tournament across the Meadowlands area. Newark's event is scheduled for June 24, 2026, from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Mulberry Commons in downtown Newark and will feature live entertainment, cultural programming, interactive experiences and large-screen match viewing.

To help residents and visitors experience more of Newark during FIFA World Cup 2026™, Newark Alliance ran a special World Cup cycle of its Experience Newark Event Sponsorship Program. The initiative offers microgrants to support community-driven events across the city, with eligible events taking place from June 27 to July 19, 2026.

Ashley Mays, Chief Marketing Officer at Newark Alliance and President of Newark Happening, said the program is designed to empower grassroots initiatives that create community while authentically welcoming visitors. "The Experience Newark Community Event Sponsorship Program grants help neighborhoods bring their ideas to life and create experiences that reflect Newark's varied cultures and community pride," Mays shared.

In addition to community programming, Newark Alliance will curate "Stay & Play" packages in collaboration with local hotels to encourage visitors to explore the city's dining, arts, and cultural offerings beyond match days, and Mobile Passport

Newark Explorer Trails on Bandwango to make it easy for visitors to explore a variety of local businesses throughout all wards of the City and a variety of thematic trails such as "Art, Beauty & Culture", "Self Care" and "Wellness." Visitors will discover Newark as a living, breathing city where music, art, food and community energy combine to create a world-class experience.

Newark Alliance's 'Newark Welcome Team' initiative engages hospitality ambassadors circulating around transit hubs, major events and high-traffic locations to assist visitors, provide recommendations and connect guests with local attractions and businesses.

Invest Newark, the economic development agency for Newark, is also offering training programs and grants to support local businesses engaging in the World Cup. The Ready, Set, Goal training sessions continue the week of April 13th and applications for Invest Newark Ready, Set, Goal Business Development Grant close on April 20th. Marcus Randolph, President and CEO of Invest Newark, said the initiatives are intended to deliver both immediate and lasting benefits. "The World Cup presents a rare opportunity to showcase Newark to a global audience while generating meaningful economic impact for local businesses and communities," he said.

Newark's location, walkable downtown, and proximity to MetLife Stadium make it a natural gathering place for fans traveling throughout the region. But Newark's role in FIFA World Cup 2026™ is about more than geography. It is a city shaped by cultural diversity and a real connection to soccer, reflected in its residents and in institutions like Ironbound Soccer Club and St. Benedict's Prep. As the tournament approaches, investments in public safety, beautification, infrastructure, and community programming will help Newark welcome visitors while creating lasting benefits for residents. During the World Cup, the city's neighborhoods, public spaces, and

festivals will showcase the energy, pride, and sense of community that define Newark. The coordinated effort will support public safety, beautification, infrastructure improvement, and citywide engagement while strengthening Newark's reputation as a cultural and tourism destination. During the World Cup, the city's neighborhoods, public spaces and festivals will come together as one rhythm – reflective of football's global spirit and Newark's own legacy of creativity, resilience and community.

For more information, please visit <https://www.newarkhappening.com/FIFA2026/>

ABOUT NEWARK

For more information on the City of Newark, please visit <https://www.newarknj.gov/>.

ABOUT NEWARK ALLIANCE

The Newark Alliance, through the combined strength and collaboration of its members, drives inclusive economic growth for all of Newark, N.J. Our members comprise Newark's premier businesses, anchor institutions, and community partners, including Fortune 100 and 500 companies and several of the country's top universities, developers, hospitals, and arts institutions. United by a shared vision, the Alliance and its Members work collaboratively to

cement Newark's status as one of America's most diverse, prosperous, exciting, and equitable cities. Visit us at www.newark-alliance.org, www.newarkhappening.com and www.downtownnewark.com.

ABOUT INVEST NEWARK

Invest Newark, the city's Economic Development Corporation, propels economic growth by championing small businesses, improving internet access and facilitating real estate development. These endeavors lead to job creation and wealth generation, enhancing the overall welfare of Newark's residents.

Distinguished by our unwavering dedication to equity and sustainability,

Invest Newark stands apart as a forward-thinking development agency. Stay up to date on Invest Newark's latest news by following us

on [X](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [LinkedIn](#), or visit us at [InvestNewark.org](#).

SOURCE Newark Alliance

NEWS

Newark's Ironbound neighborhood comes alive for World Cup watch party

by: [Zhané Caldwell](#)
Posted: Jun 24, 2026 / 11:01 PM EDT
Updated: Jun 24, 2026 / 11:01 PM EDT



NEWARK, NJ (PIX 11) — The World Cup brought fans from around the world to Newark, where the Ironbound neighborhood transformed into a massive watch party on Wednesday, celebrating soccer, culture, and community.

International pride was on full display as dozens of excited soccer fans came out to the Newark Fan Village.

[Discover more local reporting on our homepage](#)

Ferry Street came alive with a massive screen, food, vendors, and interactive activities as fans cheered on their favorite teams. Kayke Lopes came dressed in full

support of Brazil, wearing the country's flag as a cape.

“It's my country,” said Lopes. “I got to always support.”

He added, “Always got to get the Brazil jersey when you're watching a Brazil game, and then we had the flag, and I was like, today I'm going to use it as a cape.”

Jan Furuly came all the way from Norway for some World Cup fun.

“There's a great vibe here,” he said. “We knew that there would be a lot of Brazilians. This is a Brazilian neighborhood of Jersey. So, this is the best place to watch the game.”

Cheers echoed through the festival with every goal as organizers aim to bring the experience beyond the stadium and into local neighborhoods, while celebrating Newark's rich cultural diversity. Food vendors served up cultural dishes from around the world, like the eatery Joey Bats, selling Portuguese cuisine.

[Discover more local reporting on our homepage](#)

“It’s a pastel de nata,” said Joey Bats employee Bryant Cruz, describing a pastry on display. “It’s a custard filling wrapped in a flaky croissant. We have some flavors which is new so we’re trying to bring that to the crowd.”

The Newark Fan Village runs daily throughout the tournament, serving as a central hub where fans can gather, watch every match, and celebrate the city's passion for soccer.

“That’s the beauty of the sport,” said attendee Gabriel Dos Santos. “It brings people together. Even people from other countries or people who are not Brazilian at all. They just came to support — to have fun. Good vibes only and that’s what we’re here for.”

The next Flag Cities festival and watch party is on Friday in East Rutherford.

=====

ON RUTGERS DAY AT NEWARK'S WORLD CUP FAN VILLAGE, VISITORS SEE RED



PHOTO CREDIT: Samuel Sylvester

You didn't have to be a soccer fan to celebrate Rutgers Day at the Fan Village in Newark.

Hundreds of alumni—and other members of the Rutgers University-Newark community—showed up to return to their RU-N roots and enjoy the culture of the city’s Ironbound section.

Esron Holder, a business major who graduated this year and is pursuing a masters degree at Rutgers Business School, was happy to come back as an alumnus.

“Ever since I graduated in May, I haven’t really seen people,” he said. “Any time I get an opportunity, I want to come out.”

The World Cup fan village, co-created by Rutgers-Newark alumnus Kreshnik Berisha, features daily watch parties, along with vendors and food trucks

reflecting the neighborhood's multicultural vibrancy. The Ironbound is home to large Portuguese, Brazilian, and South and Central American communities, including some of the most passionate soccer fans in America. Rutgers-Newark is a sponsor of the fan village, which is free and open to the public through July 19, when the World Cup ends.

“We are thrilled to sponsor the event and work in partnership with the community and the city to welcome the world to Newark,” said Arcelio Aponte, Rutgers-Newark Senior Vice Chancellor for Administration, Economic Development, and Chief Financial Officer.

On Rutgers Day at the village—located in the parking lot of the former Iberia Tavern & Restaurant, where the landmark eatery’s turreted castle still stands—Colombia, a fan favorite, played Switzerland. The space was filled with fans wearing the Colombian team’s yellow soccer jerseys, in addition to the throng of RU visitors in scarlet gear.

Beyond the game itself, the event provided a chance for the Rutgers community to network and party together.

“I love staying involved and active and plugged into all the events that keep people connected,” said Adrienne Simmons, Class of ‘86, who graduated from the School of Arts and Sciences—

Newark with a degree in Management and Finance and later forged a career in law enforcement.

For Jennifer Reyes, who graduated from Rutgers Business School this year with a degree in Leadership and Management, Rutgers Day at the fan village was the perfect introduction to life as an RU alum.

“I wanted to meet other alumni, especially during the World Cup. It’s a spectacular way to meet new people,” said Reyes, who grew up in the Ironbound section of Newark.

Rutgers-Newark’s support of the fan village—and the Ironbound—has been a joyful way to connect RU-N’s local and

worldwide communities, said Rutgers-Newark Chancellor Tonya Smith-Jackson.

“The World Cup is a global opportunity for people to come together,” she said.

“We’re one big family.”

Carlos Ferreira, a RU-N alumnus who heads public relations for the Newark fan village through his firm Plusable, said the day provided a chance for Rutgers alums, students, staff and faculty to discover—or rediscover—what the Ironbound has to offer.

“I don’t know if all of our alumni or our community members are aware of all the Ironbound’s treasures,” said Ferreira, a Rutgers alum and Ironbound resident who received a masters in from the School of

Communications and Information (SCI) in 2021.

“Rutgers Day shows that the university is supporting grass roots initiatives in the city,” he said.

Ferreira, a part-time lecturer who teaches a course on social media at the New Brunswick campus, worked with School of Communications and Information graduate students to develop a “Taste the Game” campaign for the Ironbound Business Improvement District, which seeks to draw visitors during the World Cup.

On Rutgers Day, he showed off his skills as a drummer as he took the stage during

a set from deejay Nick Keleshian, a Rutgers-Newark alum.

Keleshian, who graduated with a degree in Marketing in 2018, owns a music studio called bunkr. on Halsey Street, where producers from around the world come to record tracks.

He was proud to represent RU-N at the fan village.

“It’s a great experience,” he said. “For the World Cup, you want to be in a place with a lot of people, where it’s loud. You don’t want to be in an empty room by yourself.”

Keleshian hyped up the crowd with the Colombia Goal Song, but unfortunately, Colombia lost 4-3 on penalties.

“After that the energy level dropped,” he admitted, “But it was still a great day.”

THE WORLD CUP IS OVER. NEWARK'S COMMUNITY MOMENTUM AND ECONOMIC IMPACT IS NOT





